

safer if we leave Iraq than if we stay. Isn't that the key question? The question is not whether the Iraqi government deserves American sacrifice on their behalf.

Our sons and daughters are not fighting, being grievously wounded and dying for Iraq—but for American vital interests. If this were just about Iraqi democracy, I might join the screaming for a quick exit.

But if al Qaeda can plausibly claim they drove America out of Iraq (just as they drove the Soviet Union out of Afghanistan), they will gain literally millions of new adherents in their struggle to destroy America and the West. We will then pay in blood, treasure and future wars vastly more than we are paying today to manage and eventually win our struggle in Iraq.

Our staying power, unflinching persistence in the face of adversity, muscular capacity to impose order on chaos and eventual slaughtering of terrorists who are trying to drive us out will do more to win the "hearts and minds" of potentially radical Islamists around the world than all the little sermons about our belief in Islam as the religion of peace. As bin Laden once famously observed—people follow the strong horse.

We have two choices: Use our vast resources to prove we are the strong horse or get ready to be taken to the glue factory.

Even Bush's war critics who specialize in Middle East affairs (such as the Brookings Institute) believe that the immediate chaos in the Middle East that will follow our premature departure would likely involve not only regional war there, a new base for al Qaeda, but also a nuclear arms race that would quickly result in the world's most unstable region—which possesses the world's oil supply—armed with nuclear weapons on a hair trigger.

But the debate today in Washington is about none of these strategic concerns. It is exclusively about Washington's political timetable and when the president will bend to such political necessity. For self-admitted politics—rather than national security—to be driving decision making in wartime Washington is not only an unpatriotic disgrace—it is a national menace.

Imagine the following fanciful discussion in April 1943:

FDR: "Ike, you're going to have to get the Normandy Invasion completed by June this year."

Ike: "But I need at least another year to assemble troops and materiel, establish logistics and strategy and train the men for the battle."

FDR: "Sorry. Several senators are feeling very uncomfortable with the war. Frankly, they have just had it. And several of them are worried about their re-election."

Ike: "My men are fighting and dying for yards in Italy right now—and even so, they can't wait to take the war to Hitler next year in France. Tell those pantywaisted senators to unloosen their girdles, take an aspirin and go to bed—and leave the fighting to my men."

FDR: "But we could lose the Senate."

Ike: "Better to lose the Senate than the war."

FDR: "I'm with you, Ike. You beat Hitler, and let me beat the Senate."

Ike: "My men thank you, Mr. President." Of course, it is an absurdity to imagine such a conversation would have been possible during WWII. And it is a tragedy and disgrace that we are, in fact, having precisely such a conversation today.

But the worm will surely turn. And senators who today proudly call for retreat will then be hiding their faces in shame. And deservedly so. And the public will remember.

Mr. ISAKSON. I yield the floor.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from New Hampshire is recognized.

MINORITY RIGHTS

Mr. GREGG. Mr. President, I so greatly admire the Senator from Georgia, and his words are so well spoken, I hope people will take them to heart. I also wish to rise on this issue. Before I do that, I wish to speak briefly on the issue pending, which is the cloture motion on the amendment from the Senator from Virginia, Senator WEBB. I haven't decided how to vote on the amendment of the Senator from Virginia. I have an immense amount of respect for the Senator, the former Secretary of the Navy, whom I greatly admire for his service to this country, but I am deeply concerned by the process which is being used.

It has always been the tradition of this Senate that there would be side-by-side votes. It used to be, when I first arrived, that there were actually second-degree votes, and then we got to a position where everybody knew if you had a second degree, you could always get to the first-degree vote, so you gave people side-by-side votes. Unless the issue is on the fundamental question of an overriding bill, the use of cloture for the purposes of cutting off the debate to that amendment has not occurred around here. This is an attempt to basically make the Senate operate as if it had the autocratic Rules Committee of the House, and it is wrong. It is just plain wrong.

The minority should be afforded the right—and has the right—to assert an amendment to an amendment offered on this floor. It has the right to a second degree if it wishes to, and then the author of the first degree has the right to position himself or herself so he or she can bring that amendment back up. As an alternative to that, the offer of a side by side is the way you resolve the issue. That offer was made to allow a side by side on the amendment of the Senator from Virginia. It was rejected, as I understand it. That is what this cloture vote, for me, is about. It is not about the credibility—not the credibility—it is not about the appropriateness or the correctness of the underlying amendment of the Senator from Virginia; it is about whether the minority has the procedural right to assert its standing as a functioning entity within the body and, therefore, the ability to amend or at least have a side-by-side amendment when amendments are brought to the floor on which there may be other views.

So that is why I intend to vote against cloture. It is not to extend the debate; it is not to, in some way, undermine the bill or even to undermine the amendment; it is to make sure that the rights of the minority are protected in this institution where the rights of the minority are the essence of the way this institution functions.

WITHDRAWAL FROM IRAQ

Mr. GREGG. On the question of Iraq, and specifically as I have my own amendment which I will be offering—it is not my amendment; I have an amendment in which I am joined by other Members, including Senator SALAZAR, on how to proceed in Iraq, and we will be talking about that later—maybe even later today—I wish to speak briefly on an amendment being offered by Senator REID and Senator LEVIN which fixes a timeframe for withdrawal that is arbitrary and which is condensed. That timeframe, as I understand it, would occur within 6 months, when there would be a withdrawal. There are no underlying policy proposals which say that the Government of Iraq has to be a functioning government and has to have the capacity to secure itself and has to have the capacity to maintain stability in order for the withdrawal to occur; the withdrawal simply is going to occur. I think the practical implications for that are pretty staggering and not constructive to the process, quite honestly. I think a precipitous withdrawal from Iraq, which has no underlying policy and which leaves behind a stable government or attempts to leave behind a stable government, will inevitably lead to a desperate government, which will, in turn, lead to chaos, and chaos in Iraq is not in our national interests.

We have to remember what the stakes are. Our purpose of being in Iraq is fundamentally to protect ourselves as a nation. The people who wish to do us harm—and they have made it clear they intend to do us harm and they have done us harm—intend to use their ability to attack the United States as the essence of their war on us. The way you keep them from attacking our Nation is to find them where they are and attack them and to make it very difficult for them to have a safe haven and to disrupt their activities and to find them before they can attack us. That is our philosophy. It is a philosophy which is totally appropriate to the war that we now find ourselves engaged in.

This is not a conventional situation. We are not fighting a nation state. We are fighting individuals who subscribe to a philosophy which says they will have a better afterlife if they destroy Western culture and specifically kill Americans and destroy America. That is their purpose. They have said that and they have done it. Let's not be naive about this. Let's not look at this through rose-colored glasses and say they wish some other outcome and if we are nice to them they will go away; that if we ignore them, they will ignore us. That is not the case.

So we have pursued a policy in Iraq and across the world of finding them before they find us. If Iraq, because of a precipitous withdrawal which leaves no stability behind, is allowed to devolve into chaos, it is very obvious what is going to happen. Besides a civil